

Prohibited Activities

Ohio - AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisor Conference



- Use the chat feature on the right side of the screen to ask questions.
- If we are unable to get to your question, it will be posted with the answer in the forum section on the conference web-page.
- PowerPoint will be available on the session page 24 hours after the session is complete.

House Keeping

Ohio - AmeriCorps VISTA Supervisor Conference

Prohibited Activities

Corporation for
**NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE** ★★ ★



List of Participants

Full Screen Mode

Ask Questions

Participants Chat Notes

Participants

tara (m)

Tyra Martin (host)

Rate Hand Audio

Chat

Send to: Tyra Ma... (Host & Presenter)

Select a participant in the Send to menu that, type chat message, and send...

Send

Kim Judy



Mark Wilson



Meghan Hines



Presenters and Moderators

Understand Policies and Rules that Govern VISTA Member Service

- Prohibited Activities
 - Hatch Act
 - Religious Activities
 - Nepotism
 - Teleservice
- Activities and Workplans
 - Staff Displacement
 - Direct Service
 - Administration and Support

Objectives

Prohibited Activities

- Prevent the use of public funds for electoral purposes.
- Prohibits partisan political activity on the part of federal employees.
- VISTAs are NOT federal employees, but are still governed by the Hatch Act.

The Hatch Act - Defined

- VISTA projects and members are recipients of public dollars
- Prohibitions
 1. Engaging in electoral activities
 2. Working on or influencing pending legislation (e.g. lobbying)
 3. Participating in demonstrations
- Identifying as a VISTA

The Hatch Act

Electoral Activities

During their service year, a VISTA **may not**:

- Wear partisan political buttons (while on duty)
- Use official authority or influence to interfere with an election
- Solicit or discourage political activity of anyone with business before the VISTA project where they serve
- Solicit or receive political contributions while in their VISTA service term, even on their own time
- Be candidates for public office in partisan elections

The Hatch Act - Electoral Activities

Influencing Legislation (lobbying)

While on duty or identifiable as a VISTA, a VISTA **may not**:

- Influence the passage or defeat of legislation, proposals, or initiatives

A VISTA **may**:

- Draft, review, testify, or make presentations *when requested* by a legislative committee

The Hatch Act - Influencing Legislation

Demonstrations

While on duty or perceived to be a VISTA, a VISTA **may not**:

- Participate in any demonstration, whether live or virtual

The Hatch Act - Demonstrations

You **may not** ask VISTAs to:

- Draft letters or materials for or against partisan candidates or legislative initiatives
- Suggest a client call or write his/her representative in support of or in opposition to an issue
- Conduct or encourage voter registration
- Drive community members to the polls

**The Hatch Act - Prohibited
Assignments**

While **not on duty** and while **not identifying** as a VISTA, VISTAs **may**:

- Register and vote as s/he chooses
- Attend and be active at political rallies and meetings
- Express opinions about candidates and issues
- Contribute money to political organizations or attend fundraising events
- Assist in voter registration drives
- Sign nominating petitions
- Campaign for or against referendums , amendments, or ordinances
- Campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections
- Drive voters to the polls (not in a project vehicle)
- Join and be an active member of a political party or club and hold office
- Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections
- Be a candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections

The Hatch Act - What VISTAs Can Do

- CNCS Partnerships Include:
 - Non-Profit Organizations
 - Public Agencies
 - Private Agencies
 - Faith Based Organizations

Faith Based and Community Partnerships are important collaborators with CNCS.

Prohibitions regarding religious activities are restrictions regardless of the type of organization where a member serves.

Religious Activities

VISTA Members can NOT:

- Proselytize
- Develop or administer religious programming
- Encourage or implore others to participate in religious activities

Religious Activities - Prohibitions

Sponsors can NOT:

- Select VISTA applicants/members according to religion or inquire about a candidate's religion during the application process
 - Members should be interviewed according to their knowledge, skills and abilities relevant to the opportunity and organization that they are applying for
- Assign VISTA members to develop services/programs where beneficiaries are discriminated for services according to faith
- Involve members to include religious instruction in any of the programs/services they are developing

Religious Activities – Limiting Service

- Spiritual activities with beneficiaries of the VISTA program must be voluntary and separate in time or location from programs/services developed with VISTA members
- A VISTA member can have an informal workplace conversation about faith, when asked, as long as the discussion is brief and participation is voluntary
- A VISTA member can participate in staff devotionals or prayers, as long as the participation is brief and voluntary
- A VISTA member can take time for personal devotionals or prayers, as long as it is brief
- Longer voluntary discussions or spiritual activities can be scheduled for off duty times

Religious Activities – Other considerations

The practice of those with influence giving a job to a relatives or friends.

- This practice is not allowed with VISTAs
- VISTA Members – cannot be supervised by a member of his/her family
- VISTA members cannot be related to a project site staff member or a member of the project site's board of directors
- VISTA Supervisors – cannot be related to the CNCS state office staff who is responsible for the VISTA project

Nepotism

Teleservice is the same as telework and the policy is VISTAs response to the growing trend in the workplace.

- Members must be in service for more than three months to teleserve.
- Teleservice has limitations (2 days/pay period)
- VADs must be appropriate for teleservice.

Teleservice

The State office approves ALL teleservice requests and to be approved the following conditions must be met:

- Supervisor and state office must agree the member:
 - knows the organization and the people within it well
 - lives and serves the people in the community, and knows the community and people sufficiently to serve them well;
 - has proven to the sponsor/supervisor to be a reliable team member
 - understands that VISTA service is not a 9-5 assignment; that it demands flexibility and availability in one's schedule
- Above average supervision including mentoring and coaching is available to the member

Teleservice - Conditions

1. Supervisor or member requests a Teleservice Checklist form from the state office
2. Completes the form, including supervisor's signature
3. Submits the form to the state office. The state office must approve the requested teleservice, prior to any teleservice at the site.

Teleservice - Approval

Activities and Workplans

- Why are VISTA's rules so different?
 - Four principles of VISTA
 - Anti-poverty
 - Community Empowerment
 - Sustainability
 - Capacity Building
- What types of activities are not allowed?
 - Staff, contractor and volunteer displacement
 - Direct Service
 - Administration
 - Supervision
- Ultimate question:
 - Are the VISTA member's activities the same capacity building activities that the VAD and project plan describe?



Activities and Work Plans

- **Anti-Poverty Focus:** VISTA projects must be explicitly designed to alleviate poverty.
- **Community Empowerment:** Residents of the community must be involved in all stages of the VISTA project, including planning, development and implementation.
- **Sustainability:** VISTA is a short-term resource to help sponsor organizations achieve lasting solutions to poverty.
- **Capacity Building:** VISTA projects expand the ability of organizations to fight poverty, enabling them to provide better services to low-income individuals and communities.
- Every principle. Every time. Everything that the VISTA member does.

Four Principles of VISTA

- Volunteer activities that already exist cannot be taken over by the VISTA member
- Staff and contractor activities cannot be taken over by the VISTA
- VISTA members cannot supplement positions that were recently eliminated from the agency
- VISTA members cannot supplant the planned hiring of workers or impair existing contracts for service
- Pro-labor or anti-labor activities
 - VISTA members must not be assigned to activities that assist any labor or anti-labor organizing activity
- **Key principle**
 - **Capacity Building:** Is the VISTA acquiring resources and building capacity for something new that will outlive the year of service or are they keeping the lights on?

Staff Displacement



- VISTA members work on developing programming, resources or fundraising for poverty alleviation
- VISTA members **do not** provide direct services or benefits to clients such as tutoring, counseling or teaching
- **Key Question:** Instead of asking, "Is this direct service," ask, "Is this part of the project plan?"
- **Key principles**
 - **Capacity Building and Sustainability:** Direct service is not sustainable and it does not build capacity.

Direct Service

- “Is this part of the project plan at this stage in the project?”
 - If not, what needs to change so that the VISTA is no longer doing it?
- **Long-term impact:** 84% of projects continue beyond two years after the last VISTA has finished working on the project
 - VISTA Program Assessment, 2010



**Fight Poverty
with PASSION**

*84% of VISTA projects continue after
the last VISTA leaves*

Direct Service (cont.)



- **Supervising versus coordinating**

- A supervisor says what someone **must do**. A coordinator tells them what they **should do**
- There must be a supervisor actively participating in the project that the VISTA can turn to for direction
- Chain of communication: VISTA members are on the end of the chain on the org chart. No one reports to a VISTA member or a VISTA Leader

Administration and Supervision



- **VISTA members can:**

- Coordinate volunteers
- Fundraise for relevant anti-poverty programming and agency sustainability
- Create systems and recruit volunteers
- Temporarily maintain new systems that they have implemented

- **VISTA Leaders can:**

- Coordinate and coach VISTA members
- Assist in creating member training
- Assist in new VISTA member recruitment
- Assist in VISTA project strategic planning
- Coordinate progress reporting between members

Administration and Supervision (cont.)

- **VISTA members cannot:**

- Cannot provide day to day supervision, such as:
 - Supervising staff or contracts
 - Supervising volunteers or other AmeriCorps or Senior Corps members
- Cannot be an administrative assistant
 - Cannot manage executive calendars
 - Cannot provide phone reception for the agency
 - Cannot manage any aspect of a grant between your agency and CNCS
 - Including making any submissions in eGrants
 - Including raising funds toward any CNCS match or cost share program
- “As a VISTA, I had more responsibility than I deserved.”
 - Responsibilities are good. Direct supervisory or administration tasks are not.
- **Key principle**
 - **Community Empowerment:** Is the VISTA member working to enhance the inherent strengths, resources and empowerment of the community or are they wrongfully acting to support management?

Administration and Supervision (cont.)



- Everything that a VISTA member does is justified by *all four* VISTA principles:
 - Anti-Poverty Focus
 - Community Empowerment
 - Capacity Building
 - Sustainability
- VISTA members are not staff and cannot replace permanent “keeping the lights on” activities
- VISTA members do not work directly with clients to provide services
- VISTA members can coordinate projects but they cannot supervise projects
- **Key question:** “Is this activity part of the current stage of the project plan?”

Activities and Work Plans (Summary)

- VISTA Campus (<http://vistacampus.org>)
 - Supervisor's Manual (<http://goo.gl/fp43ex>)
 - Prohibited activities (<http://goo.gl/sbtQCu>)
 - VISTA 101 (<http://goo.gl/OMZ1hM>)
 - Interactive basic training for new site supervisors
 - VISTA Member Handbook (<http://goo.gl/McPpy3>)
 - Limitations on Member Activities and Duties (<http://goo.gl/WuZ8JJ>)
- State Office (Program Specialist)
 - Contact information: <http://go.usa.gov/Wy6V>
- VISTA FY 2014 Program Guidance (<http://go.usa.gov/WV3z>)



Resources

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AMERICORPS
VISTA

List of Participants

Full Screen Mode

Ask Questions

Participants

Tara [redacted]

Tyra Martin [redacted]

Chat

Send to: Tyra Ma... (Select & Presentee)

Send

**Questions and Answers – Use Chat
Feature on Right Side of Screen**

- All session content will be available on the VISTA campus page after the conference.
- Additional Questions can be posed on the forums on the conference page. Check back often for responses.
- Thank you for participating in the first annual VISTA Supervisor Conference

Reminders